

WASHINGTON, DC – Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) released the following statement today in celebration of Filipino American Heritage Month, which begins on October 1:

"As Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), I am honored to join you in celebrating Filipino American Heritage Month and recognize the history, culture, and vast accomplishments of Filipino Americans.

"Dating back to 1763, Filipinos established their first permanent settlement in North America near New Orleans. Since then, Filipinos have migrated across the country settling mainly in Hawaii and California, and metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Washington, D.C. and Seattle. In 2007, the Filipino American community was estimated to be at 4 million, or 1.5% of the United States population.

"Many of our Filipino brothers and sisters have summoned the courage to leave their families and homeland to begin a new life in America. And with their hard work and contributions, they have provided new possibilities and opportunities for future generations. Individual leaders within the Filipino American community, like Philip Vera Cruz of the United Farm Workers of America, profoundly influenced the farm workers movement while contributing to the wider effort of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to fight for justice and equality.

"The Filipino American community has embraced and actively participated in American society. In addition to the tireless commitment of many Filipino American families to raise their children as positive contributors in their various communities – by investing in education, businesses, and opportunities for the future – individual Filipino Americans have distinguished themselves through their service and vision.

"This list of notables includes General Antonio Taguba, who authored the Taguba Report, an

internal U.S. Army report on detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, leaked and published in 2004; Benjamin J. Cayetano, who in 1994 became the first Filipino American governor in the United States; and Rep. Bobby Scott, the only Filipino American member of Congress and Chair of CAPAC's Civil Rights Task Force. I am proud to work closely with Congressman Scott, a strong advocate protecting the civil rights of all Americans.

"During this month, we also recognize the sacrifices and active participation of the 250,000 Filipinos soldiers who fought side by side the United States army during World War II.. Sixty one years ago, Congress broke a promise to Filipino World War II veterans by stripping these soldiers of United States veteran's status. The passage of the Rescission Acts of 1946 robbed these brave men of their veterans' benefits despite their courageous service in defending the Philippine Islands and aiding the United States military. In order to right this injustice and support our veterans, CAPAC is fighting to provide the full benefits promised to the surviving Filipino veterans who fought in WWII under the American flag.

"CAPAC is also working hard to unite Filipino American families who have been separated for far too long due to our immigration backlogs. Take for example, Francisco Villacrusis, an elderly U.S. citizen, who is a widower in poor health left alone without the care and support of his son and his daughter. They are in the Philippines, waiting in the U.S. family immigration backlogs since 1994, according to a report by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. These decades of separation are inhumane and unacceptable and fail to honor the contributions of Filipino families and all immigrant families who help to build our American economy.

"Once again, I congratulate the Filipino American community for all their contributions to this great nation. I look forward to continuing our work together as we celebrate how far we have come, and work toward a brighter future."

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have

a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .